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## 10.0 RECREATION RESOURCES

This section describes the recreational resources in the vicinity of the Middle Fork American River Project (MFP or Project). The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC's or Commission's) content requirements for this section are specified in Title 18 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Chapter 1 § 5.6(d)(3)(viii).

Note that the FERC regulations require the applicant to provide information regarding both recreation and land use. This section provides general information about the developed and dispersed recreation resources in the Middle Fork American River Watershed (Watershed) and specific information about the developed Project recreation facilities. Land management related topics, including shoreline buffer zones, shoreline management plans, and non-recreation land use within and adjacent to the FERC Project boundary are discussed separately in Section 11.0, Land Use. Additional information about the recreation resources associated with the MFP, including use levels and facility capacity, will continue to be developed as the relicensing process proceeds. Future reports will provide this new information.

### 10.1 INFORMATION SOURCES

General information concerning recreation facilities, opportunities, activities, and management goals was developed using the following primary information sources:

- Placer County General Plan;
- Tahoe and Eldorado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plans;
- Granite Chief Wilderness Management Plan;
- Auburn State Recreation Area Interim Resource Management Plan;
- National Forest and United States Geographical Society (USGS) topographic maps;
- Resource agency websites; and
- Miscellaneous recreation brochures and resource agency publications.

Specific information regarding the Project recreation facilities was developed primarily using the following information sources:

- Placer County Water Agency (PCWA) and the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USDA-FS) Tahoe and Eldorado National Forests Collection Agreement (2003 and Amendments).
- The Middle Fork American River Project (FERC Project No. 2079) Revised Recreation Plan (PCWA 1989).

The discussion on whitewater boating is based on information obtained from resource agency websites, maps, and the following two guidebooks:

- California Whitewater: A Guide to the Rivers by Jim Cassady and Fryar Calhoun (1995), and;
- The Best Whitewater in California: The Guide to 180 Runs by Lars Holbek and Chuck Stanley (1998).

This section also contains information provided by various agency personnel from the USDA-FS, the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR). The information presented in this section is based on existing information; no new recreation data was collected or analyzed.

## **10.2 OVERVIEW OF RECREATION RESOURCES IN THE WATERSHED**

The MFP facilities are situated in the foothills and mountainous uplands of the western slope of the central Sierra Nevada, within the Tahoe and Eldorado National Forests. The MFP facilities are located on the Middle Fork American River, the Rubicon River, Duncan Creek and the North and South Forks of Long Canyon Creek, within an area referred to in this report as the Middle Fork American River Watershed (Watershed).

The Watershed is characterized by steep canyons and rugged terrain with dense forests and woodlands. The bypass streams (streams located downstream of Project facilities) flow from elevations ranging from a high of approximately 5,200 ft above mean sea level (msl) at French Meadows Reservoir and Duncan Creek Diversion to approximately 1,100 ft msl at Ralston Afterbay. The surrounding ridges reach elevations as high as 7,000 ft msl.

The Watershed is heavily forested, rural in nature and sparsely populated. There are no residential or commercial developments in the immediate vicinity of the Project. The nearest population center is Foresthill (population 1,791), located approximately four miles west-northwest of Ralston Afterbay. Several paved roads provide the primary access to the MFP facilities and Watershed. These include: Mosquito Ridge Road, Ralston Ridge Road, Blacksmith Flat Road and Soda Springs Riverton Road. Access to more remote locations in the Watershed is possible using ancillary roads and trails associated with the Forest Service Transportation System.

The Project facilities and the land within the FERC Project boundary are located primarily within the Eldorado National Forest (ENF) and Tahoe National Forest (TNF). Private parcels are present throughout the Watershed and intersect the FERC Project boundary at various locations. Land use within the FERC Project boundary is focused on hydropower generation and recreation. The land outside the FERC Project boundary is managed for recreation, timber harvest, grazing, natural resource protection, and to a lesser extent mining.

A wide variety of land and water-based recreational opportunities are available in the Watershed. Popular recreation activities include camping, hiking, equestrian use, sightseeing, swimming, camping, picnicking, hunting, flat water boating, whitewater boating, fishing, mining, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and off-highway vehicle (OHV) riding. These activities are supported by a variety of developed recreation

facilities located throughout the Watershed including public campgrounds, day-use and picnic areas, boat ramps, scenic vistas, hiking and equestrian trails, off-highway vehicle (OHV) staging areas and trails, river access for whitewater boating, and snowmobile and cross-country snow trails.

Most of the developed recreational facilities in the Watershed are concentrated around French Meadows Reservoir, Hell Hole Reservoir, Ralston Afterbay, and along the South Fork of Long Canyon Creek. Recreation also occurs at many undeveloped or “dispersed” sites throughout the Watershed. Most areas in the ENF and TNF are open to dispersed camping, free of charge (ENF 2006) and visitors may camp anywhere that camping is not specifically prohibited. Campfire permits are required.

Numerous trails traverse the Watershed. Most of the trails within the National Forest are considered multi-purpose and are used for hiking, mountain biking and equestrian use. OHV use is restricted to designated areas and is limited due to steep terrain. Motorized snow travel is permitted in most areas with a minimum snow pack of 12 inches, barring all ground contact. The nearest designated cross-country ski and snowshoe trails are found at Deller Springs off Mosquito Ridge Road.

The Middle Fork American River downstream of Oxbow Powerhouse is boated both commercially and privately and PCWA voluntarily releases flows to accommodate commercial whitewater boating activities to the extent practicable. The Rubicon River and Middle Fork American River upstream of Ralston Reservoir are not boated commercially, but the Foothill Water Network reports that intermediate to expert boaters occasionally run portions of both of these reaches when flows are available (Foothill Water Network 2006). More information about the whitewater boating opportunities in the Watershed, including the location of popular runs, flow preferences, and estimated use is provided in Section 10.6.

### **10.3 SPECIALLY DESIGNATED AREAS IN THE WATERSHED**

Several specially designated areas are present in the Watershed and are shown on Map 10-1. In accordance with the FERC regulations, this subsection addresses the following:

- River segments that are designated as part of, or are under study for inclusion in, the National Wild and Scenic River System;
- State-protected river segments;
- Project lands that are designated as or are under study for inclusion in the National Trails System;
- Project lands that are designated as, or are under study for designation as, a Wilderness Area; and
- Regionally or nationally important recreation areas in the vicinity of the Project.

This subsection also addresses other protected areas that are not specifically identified in the FERC regulations, for example a State Game Refuge that is present in the northeast portion of the Watershed.

### **10.3.1 National Wild and Scenic Rivers System**

None of the streams or rivers within the Watershed have been designated by Congress as Wild and Scenic under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (WSRA). However, the Rubicon River and the peaking reach are considered eligible or have been recommended for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act System, as summarized in the following.

- The Rubicon River, from Hell Hole Dam to Ralston Afterbay, was found to be suitable for inclusion in the WSRA by the Eldorado National Forest. The river upstream of Ellicott Bridge was found to meet the classification requirements as a “Scenic” river segment. The river downstream of Ellicott Bridge was found to meet the classification requirements of a “Wild and Scenic” river segment. These segments are identified on the Nationwide Rivers Inventory (NRI). The NRI is maintained by the National Park Service (NPS) and includes a listing of potential “candidates” for Wild and Scenic designation.
- The Middle Fork American River, from Ralston Afterbay Dam to the North Fork American River confluence, and the North Fork American River from the North Fork Debris Dam (Lake Clementine) to the intake of the Auburn Dam diversion tunnel were found to be eligible for Wild and Scenic River (WSR) designation by the USBR. The USBR also found the area immediately upstream of Lake Clementine eligible for WSR designation. None of the segments identified by the USBR are identified on the NRI.

These river segments are shown on Map 10-1 for reference. The outstandingly remarkable values (ORV's) for which these segments are considered eligible or suitable for inclusion in the WSR system are discussed in the background information provided in Appendix 10-A. Again, none of these stream reaches has been formally included in the WSR System. To date, these river segments have only been considered eligible or been recommended for inclusion. Regardless, the USDA-FS, USBR and other State and federal resource agencies are required to manage these segments and the area within ¼ mile of the river to protect their ORVs.

In 1978, 38.3 miles of the North Fork of American River from near Heath Springs to the Iowa Hill-Colfax bridge crossing was designated as a “wild” river in the National Wild and Scenic River System. This segment is also a component of the California Wild and Scenic River system. This area is shown on the Map 10-1 for reference but is not discussed further in this section because it is outside the Watershed boundary.

### 10.3.2 State Protected River Segments

The Rubicon River, from Hell Hole Reservoir to Ralston Afterbay, is designated by the State of California as a Wild Trout Stream, as shown on Map 10-1. In 1971, the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) established the California Wild Trout Program to protect and enhance wild trout fisheries. The primary purpose of the program is to preserve attractive stream trout fisheries, which are naturally sustained by wild strains of trout.

Pursuant to its designation as a Wild Trout stream, CDFG developed the “Rubicon River Wild Trout Management Plan (Plan)” in 1979. This plan summarized the trout resource status and proposed management goals, direction, activities, and recommendations for the Rubicon River. To date, the Plan has not been updated. The stated goals of the Plan are to:

- Protect the aquatic environment of the Rubicon River and its tributaries;
- Perpetuate a naturally sustained, balanced population of rainbow trout; and
- Provide a quality backcountry angling experience characterized by a naturally scenic streamside environment.

### 10.3.3 National Trails System

The National Trails System consists of National Scenic Trails, National Historic Trails, and National Recreational Trails. National Scenic and Historic Trails must be designated by an Act of Congress. National Recreation Trails may be designated by the Secretary of Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture to recognize exemplary trails of local and regional significance in response to an application from the trails’ managing agency or organization ([www.americantrails.org](http://www.americantrails.org)).

One National Recreation Trail, the Western States Trail, traverses the Watershed in the vicinity of the MFP. Two other nationally recognized trails traverse the uppermost portions of the Watershed, upstream of the MFP facilities. These are the Pacific Crest Trail, which is designated as a National Scenic Trail, and the Rubicon Trail, a nationally recognized OHV trail. The locations of these trails are shown on Map 10-2 (2 sheets) along with some of the more popular local trails in the Watershed. The Pacific Crest Trail, the Western States Trail, and the Rubicon Trail are briefly described in the following.

#### Pacific Crest Trail

The Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) traverses the crest of the Sierra and the northeastern portion of the Watershed. With a few exceptions, the PCT is one continuous trail that extends more than 2,650 miles from Mexico to Canada. At its nearest point to the MFP, the PCT is located about 5 miles east of Hell Hole Reservoir. The PCT was designated as a National Scenic Trail in 1968.

## Western States Trail

The Western States Trail traverses the Watershed in the vicinity of the Project. In general, the Western States Trail starts at Squaw Valley near Tahoe City northwest of Lake Tahoe and extends to Auburn, California, passing through Placer County. The Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture have designated the entire length of the Western States Trail as a National Recreation Trail (Placer County 2007). A portion of the Western States Trail, from Last Chance to Michigan Bluff has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Similarly, the Mountain Quarries Railroad Bridge, also known as “No Hands Bridge”, has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Western States Trail crosses the North Fork American River at No Hands Bridge. As shown on Map 10-2, the Western States Trail connects to the Pacific Crest Trail, a National Scenic Trail.

The Western States Trail originated as a Native American track, and in the mid-1800’s was used by early settlers and gold miners as the principal foot and pack stock route between the silver fields of Nevada and the gold fields of California. In an entry in his journal dated August 30, 1863, William Brewer describes his travel from Squaw Valley to Foresthill along the Western States Trail, including the route now known as the Tevis Cup Loop (Placer County 2007). In 1931, Placer County Constable Robert Montgomery Watson located and marked the Western States Trail (Hall 2006, Placer County 2007). The Western States Trail has retained its single track character and looks very much the same as it did in the 1800’s. It remains the most intact historic trans-Sierra crossing, unaffected by the presence of roads or railroads (Placer County 2007).

The Western States Trail is shown on the Map 10-2 (2 sheets). This map was developed using information contained in a publication titled *The Western States Trail Guide* (Hall 2006) and using information depicted on USDA-FS maps. Note that the trail alignment shown in the *Western States Trail Guide* is based on GPS data developed by the Western States Trail Foundation and differs from the alignment shown on USDA-FS maps. The primary difference is that the Western States Guide shows the Western States Trail heading north from Watson Monument, along the Forest Hill Divide to Robinson Flat. This is the trail used for the Tevis Cup Equestrian Ride. The USDA-FS maps show the Western States trail heading southwest from Watson Monument, along the Middle Fork American River and French Meadows Reservoir and then north to Robinson Flat. This is the main route used for the Western States 100 Endurance Run.

In a resolution dated June 12, 2007 and forwarded to Senators Boxer and Feinstein, the Placer County Board of Supervisors expressed its support for Congressional designation of the Western States Trail (with Tevis Cup Loop) as a National Historic and Scenic Trail. Similarly, on August 16, 2007, the PCWA Board of Directors adopted a resolution authorizing support, study and designation of the 100-mile Western State Trail from Squaw Valley to Auburn as a National Historic & Scenic Trail in support of the Western States Trail Foundation.

## Endurance Races

The Western States Trail is used for two world class endurance races, the Tevis Cup Equestrian Ride and the Western States 100 Endurance Run. The Tevis Cup is a nationally and internationally recognized 100-mile equestrian endurance trail ride. It began in 1955 and was the first endurance equestrian race. The race is sponsored by the Western States Trail Foundation and typically occurs at the end of July. In 2007, the race took place on July 28<sup>th</sup>. This was the 53<sup>rd</sup> running of the Tevis Cup race.

In 1974, the Western States Trail became the route of the worlds first and premiere 100 mile endurance run, the Western States Endurance Run (Placer County 2007). This race is sponsored by the Western States Endurance Run Foundation and typically occurs during the last weekend of June.

With a few exceptions, both races generally use the Western States Trail. As shown on Map 10-2 (Sheet 2 of 2), the Tevis Cup race begins at Robie Park, which is located east of Squaw Valley and northwest of Lake Tahoe. The Western States Run begins at Squaw Valley. From Squaw Valley, both races ascend to Emigrant Pass. From the pass, racers travel westward, climbing 15,540 feet and descending 22,970 feet before reaching Auburn. Variations in the race routes are shown on Map 10-2.

As shown on Map 2 (Sheet 1 of 2), both races cross the Middle Fork American River downstream of Oxbow Powerhouse at Drivers Flat (also known as Greenwood or Ruck-a-Chucky) or Poverty Bar. After crossing, both race routes traverse the south side of the Middle Fork American River to the confluence of the North Fork American River where racers cross the river. During the races, MFP operations are modified as much as practicable to reduce flow releases into the Middle Fork American River downstream of Oxbow Powerhouse to facilitate river crossings.

## **The Rubicon Trail**

The Rubicon Trail is a world-renowned 4-wheel drive route. The entire route extends from Georgetown to Lake Tahoe (USDA--FS Rubicon Trail Brochure 2006). Some of the route is paved and some is not. As shown on Map 10-2 (Sheet 2 of 2), the OHV segment begins near the north shore of Loon Lake, located in the Crystal Range in El Dorado County, and heads generally eastward, terminating near Tahoma on the west shore of Lake Tahoe. The OHV route is characterized by steep, rocky and unmaintained terrain. At its nearest point to the MFP, the trail is located about 4 miles southeast of Hell Hole Reservoir. The Rubicon Trail is not accessible from any of the MFP facilities or from any of the primary access roads in the vicinity of the Project.

### **10.3.4 Wilderness Areas**

None of the Project facilities are located within a designated Wilderness Area. However, as shown on Map 10-1, the Granite Chief Wilderness Area is located in the upper portion of the Watershed, immediately east of the MFP. At its closest points the Granite Chief Wilderness boundary is located approximately 0.25 mile east of Hell Hole Reservoir and approximately 4.5 miles east of French Meadows Reservoir. A portion

of the Desolation Wilderness is also situated in the Watershed. At its closest point, the Desolation Wilderness boundary is about eight miles south east of Hell Hole Reservoir. As shown on Map 10-1, the upper Rubicon River bisects the Desolation Wilderness and the southern boundary of Granite Chief Wilderness before entering Hell Hole Reservoir.

Senator Barbara Boxer recently introduced a Senate Bill (S. 493) to designate certain public land as Wilderness and certain rivers as Wild and Scenic. Senate Bill 493 proposes to designate numerous areas as Wilderness including the “Black Oak Wilderness” and the “Duncan Canyon Wilderness”. Both of these areas lie within the boundaries of the Middle Fork American River Watershed. Senate Bill 493 also proposes to enlarge the existing Granite Chief Wilderness Area by approximately 4,480 acres. According to GovTrack.us, “this bill is in the first stages of the legislative process and may undergo significant changes in mark up sessions” ([www.govtrack.us](http://www.govtrack.us)). Since the outcome of this bill is uncertain, these three Wilderness Areas are not discussed further in this report. The Granite Chief and Desolation Wilderness areas are briefly described in the following.

### **Granite Chief Wilderness**

The Granite Chief Wilderness Area is located west of Lake Tahoe and south of Highway 80 along the crest of the Sierra Nevada. Elevations in the Granite Chief range from 5,000 foot valleys to 9,000 foot peaks. Deep snow usually makes the Granite Chief inaccessible to hiking until late May or early June. The natural environment is predominantly unmodified providing outstanding opportunities for visitors to enjoy isolation and solitude. The Granite Chief Wilderness was established in 1984 in accordance with the direction provided by the Wilderness Act of 1964. The area was designated Wilderness “because of its pristine nature, natural beauty, and potential to provide non-motorized recreation opportunities” (USDA-FS brochure 1993).

The USDA-FS, TNF - Truckee and American River Ranger Districts administer the Granite Chief Wilderness according to the 1993 Granite Chief Wilderness Management Plan and Wilderness Implementation Schedule (USDA-FS 1993). General management direction of the Wilderness Area is also implemented in accordance with the National Forest Management Act of 1976; the California Wilderness Act of 1984; the National Historic Preservation Act; USDA-FS policy guidelines; Associate Chief Leonard’s letter dated April 12, 1988 regarding exempted competitive events; and the TNF-LRMP (USDA-FS 1990). The management objectives stress maintenance of the Wilderness as one of the multiple uses of National Forest System lands.

The Granite Chief Wilderness Area is one of the few Wilderness Areas that does not require an entry permit. However, group and stock size are limited and campfire permits are required.

### **Desolation Wilderness**

Desolation Wilderness is located southeast of Hell Hole Reservoir and southwest of Lake Tahoe. The area encompasses 63,960 acres and includes the headwaters of the

Rubicon River, the South Fork of the American River and various tributaries that flow into Lake Tahoe (USDA-FS. 1998). Desolation Wilderness was included in the National Wilderness Preservation System on October 10, 1969 in accordance with the Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964.

Desolation Wilderness is managed jointly by the Eldorado National Forest (ENF) and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU), in accordance with the direction contained in the 1964 Wilderness Act. In general, management focuses on preserving: naturally occurring ecosystems, primeval character, and the absence of man's imprint. In addition, the area is managed to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and a primitive recreation experience. Desolation Wilderness is restricted to hikers and pack stock. No motorized, mechanized, or wheeled equipment is allowed.

Permits are required year round for both day and overnight use and fees are charged for overnight camping. Group size is limited to 12 people per party. Overnight use is managed according to a zone quota system. The overnight quota is based upon the number of people entering the wilderness each day and their first night's destination zone. There are 45 zones which may be accessed by any of 15 trailhead entry points. None of the trails leading into Desolation Wilderness originate at or in the immediate vicinity of the MFP. The nearest trailhead is the Buck Island Trailhead, which is located near Buck Island Lake just outside the northwest wilderness boundary. The trailhead provides access to the Rubicon Trail, which generally parallels the Rubicon River through Rockbound Valley.

### **10.3.5 Regionally or Nationally Important Recreation Areas**

The Auburn Stated Recreation Area (ASRA) is located immediately west of the MFP and includes approximately 42,000 acres along 40 miles of the North and Middle Fork American rivers. The ASRA boundary is shown in Map 10-1. The DPR administers the area under contract with the USBR, the land owner. The main access is from Auburn, either on Highway 49 or the Auburn-Forest Hill Road. The area offers a wide variety of recreation opportunities to an average of 979,279 visitors a year (DPR no date).

The ASRA includes over 100 miles of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails that traverse the steep American River canyon. Primary recreational activities include hiking, swimming, boating, fishing, camping, mountain biking, gold panning, off-highway motorcycle riding, and horse back riding. Whitewater recreation is also very popular along both forks of the river, with 86 commercial outfitter permits issued in 2005 (DPR no date).

### **10.3.6 Other Protected Areas**

A portion of the Watershed has been designated as a State Game Refuge. As shown on Map 10-1, the refuge boundaries encompass French Meadows Reservoir, and extend roughly from the west end of French Meadows Reservoir to the northwest portion of the Granite Chief Wilderness Area. While the designation is intended primarily to protect habitat used by the Blue Canyon mule deer herd, California state law

prohibits hunting of any species within a State Game Refuge. State law also prohibits possession or discharge of firearms, pellet guns, and bows and arrows within the refuge.

#### **10.4 DEVELOPED PROJECT RECREATION FACILITIES**

PCWA has developed a number of recreation facilities in association with the MFP. The Project recreation facilities are identified in PCWA's Revised Recreation Plan (PCWA 1989) and subsequent amendments. PCWA's original Project Recreation Plan (Exhibit R) was submitted to the FERC on April 11, 1967. By memorandum dated October 9, 1987, FERC requested that PCWA revise the Project Recreation Plan and offered specific recommendations. The 1989 Revised Recreation Plan amended and updated Exhibit R, identified the "Project Recreation Facilities", and proposed enhancements and upgrades to those facilities to make them accessible to persons with disabilities. The Revised Recreation Plan was approved by FERC with modifications and the License was amended by FERC Order dated April 27, 1992.

The Project recreation facilities were developed by PCWA but are maintained by the USDA-FS in accordance with a Collection Agreement between PCWA and the USDA-FS TNF and ENF. PCWA provides the USDA-FS with a portion of the funds to operate and maintain Project recreation facilities. The 2003 Collection Agreement was amended in April 2005 and most recently in February 2006.

All of the Project recreation facilities are identified in Table 10-1 by area, and are shown on Map 10-3, which consists of an index map and four detailed sheets. As indicated, most of the Project recreation facilities are concentrated around French Meadows Reservoir, Hell Hole Reservoir, the South Fork of Long Canyon Creek, and Ralston Afterbay. There are no developed recreation facilities near Middle Fork Interbay. The recreation opportunities, activities, and developed Project recreation facilities associated each of these areas are summarized in the following.

##### **10.4.1 French Meadows Reservoir Area**

French Meadows Reservoir is located in Placer County within the boundaries of the TNF in the American River Ranger District. The reservoir is located at an elevation of 5,262 feet above mean sea level (MSL) and approximately 36 miles east of the city of Foresthill by way of Mosquito Ridge Road (USDA-FS Road 96), a two-lane paved access road.

Recreation use at French Meadows Reservoir is concentrated in the summer months. Primary summer activities include camping, sightseeing, fishing, swimming, hiking, boating, and mountain bike riding. Winter activities include cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and snowmobiling.

Camping in the French Meadows area is permitted only within the developed areas (TNF website 2006). The USDA-FS restricts overnight camping in undeveloped areas around the reservoir for resource protection. The area around French Meadows Reservoir is a designated State Game Refuge and no firearms are permitted.

Popular watercraft used on the reservoir include 10-to 20-foot aluminum-fishing boats equipped with outboard engines. Jet skis, sailboats, canoes and kayaks are also used on the reservoir to a lesser extent. There are no restrictions on the type or size of boats at French Meadows Reservoir and according to the USDA-FS, no speed limits are imposed (S. Hill pers. comm.). All Federal, State and local Boating Regulations apply and the operator of any vessel is obligated to know the laws (USDA-FS Boating Regulation brochure 2001).

French Meadows Reservoir contains rainbow and brown trout, which are planted by the CDFG throughout the season to enhance recreation fishing (TNF website 2006).

The developed Project recreation facilities in the vicinity of French Meadows Reservoir are managed by the TNF, American River Ranger District, through an agreement with PCWA. The reservable campgrounds are managed under concessionaire agreement currently with American Land and Leisure, Inc. ([www.reserveusa.com](http://www.reserveusa.com)).

Each of the developed Project recreation facilities in the French Meadows Reservoir area are shown on Map 10-3 (Sheet 1 of 4) and are briefly described in the following. The amenities available at each of the developed Project recreation facilities are summarized in Table 10-1. Estimated facility capacities are summarized in Table 10-2.

## **Campgrounds**

Campsites in the French Meadows Reservoir area typically include a graveled or paved parking spur, picnic table, a campfire ring or low grill, and bear proof containers. The campgrounds include both flush and vault toilets (USDA-FS Handout no date). Most of the campground facilities are situated within or are surrounded by coniferous forest.

Group sites in the French Meadows Reservoir area have been redesigned to accommodate Recreational Vehicles (RVs). These sites feature Klamath-type (flat griddle) stoves, campfire rings with benches, and tent space. All group sites except Black Bear, a campsite located within the Coyote Group Campground, have vault toilet facilities. Black Bear has a flush restroom and is designed to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) specifications (PCWA 1997 and 2003).

A number of campsites have been redesigned to be accessible to persons with disabilities. According to the TNF information brochures on Accessible Recreation Facilities, the facilities listed as “accessible for people with disabilities” meet the federal accessibility standards (32-inch minimum width for doorways, adequate room for turning, etc.). Slopes, pathways, and trails generally meet outdoor accessibility standards, although some assistance may be required at certain locations.

An RV dump station was installed in 2004 and was first available for use in 2005. The dump station is centrally located for access approximately 0.5 mile east of French Meadows Campground along Mosquito Ridge Road (E. Moore pers. comm.).

**French Meadows Campground.** This campground, which is located on the south shore of French Meadows Reservoir, consists of 75 single-unit campsites, a potable

water supply, and vault and flush toilets. Each unit can accommodate a maximum of six persons at one time (PAOT) and a maximum number of two vehicles giving the campground a capacity of 450 overnight visitors. The campground facilities are generally open from mid-May until the end of September, depending on snow conditions.

Sites 1–31 are reservable “Family Standard Single” sites. Four reservable sites are accessible to persons with disabilities, as is one of the toilets. Driveway lengths range from 20 to 52 feet, depending on the campsite.

Sites 32 through 75 are non-reservable and are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Four of these sites are listed as handicap accessible. The non-reservable driveway spur lengths range from 23 to 45 feet, depending on the campsite.

**Poppy Campground (Boat-in and Trail Campground).** This campground, located on the north shore of French Meadows Reservoir, is accessible by boat or via a hiking trail. The hiking trail begins near the McGuire Picnic Area and joins the Western States Trail. The Poppy Campground is located along the trail approximately 0.5 miles east of the McGuire Picnic Area. The trail is generally referred to as the McGuire Trail and is identified by the USDA-FS as route 16E10. This primitive campground consists of 12 single-units with no water supply. Vault toilets are available. The single units can accommodate six PAOT giving the overall campground a capacity of 72 overnight visitors. All sites are available on a first-come first-serve basis. There is no fee for use. Poppy Campground is open year-round but snow limits access to the region from late fall to late spring.

**Lewis Campground.** This campground, which is located on the north shore of French Meadows Reservoir, consists of 40 single-units, potable water supply and vault and flush toilets. The sites are available on a first-come, first-served basis. One site and an adjacent toilet have been designed for accessibility by handicapped individuals. Each single unit can accommodate six PAOT; the campground can accommodate a total of 240 overnight visitors. Lewis Campground is generally open from mid-May until the end of September depending on snow conditions.

**Coyote Group Campground.** This group campground, which is located on the northeast shore of French Meadows Reservoir, consists of four reservable group campsites with campfire circles, potable water supply, vault toilets and central parking. The campground facilities are closed during the winter months and are generally open from mid-May until the end of September, depending on conditions. The capacity of each group site is as follows:

- Black Bear – capacity 50 persons, maximum vehicles 20
- Little Wolf – capacity 25 persons, maximum vehicles 6
- Brush Wolf – capacity 25 persons, maximum vehicles 6
- Prairie Wolf – capacity 25 persons, maximum vehicles 6

**Gates Group Campground.** This group campground, is located on the northeast shore of the reservoir, and consists of three reservable group campsites with a campfire circle, potable water supply, flush toilets and central parking. The campground facilities are closed during the winter months and are generally open from mid-May until the end of September, depending on snow conditions. The campground can accommodate 125 overnight visitors. The capacity of each group site is as follows:

- Aspen – capacity 25 persons, 1 restroom, maximum vehicles 8
- Lodgepole – capacity 25 persons, 1 restroom, maximum vehicles 8
- Ponderosa – capacity 75 persons, 2 restrooms, maximum vehicles 25

**Ahart Campground.** This campground, which is located on the northeast shore of French Meadows Reservoir, consists of 12 single units with no water supply. Vault toilets are available. The single units can accommodate six PAOT giving the campground a capacity of 72 overnight visitors. All sites are available year-round on a first-come, first-serve basis depending on snow conditions.

### **Day Use Areas**

Two developed day use areas are present in the French Meadows Reservoir Area. Both of these day use areas consist of a boat ramp and an adjacent picnic area, as described in the following.

**French Meadows Boat Ramp.** This boat ramp is located on the south shore of French Meadows Reservoir adjacent to the French Meadows Picnic Area. The concrete boat ramp is 775 feet long by 20 feet wide. The length of the boat ramp above water varies, depending on the time of year, from approximately 50 to 500 feet. There are no restrictions on the type of boat that can be used on the reservoir. The unpaved parking lot that serves the boat ramp is 368 feet long by 104 feet wide and includes 46 parking spaces. The French Meadows boat ramp is open year-round but access may be limited by snow conditions.

**French Meadows Picnic Area.** This day-use picnic area is located on the south shore of French Meadows Reservoir adjacent to the boat ramp. The picnic area consists of seven picnic units with picnic tables and cooking grills. The picnic area can accommodate a total of 35 visitors. The area has vault toilets and a potable water supply. The unpaved parking lot is 90 by 18 feet. The French Meadows Picnic Area is generally open from mid-May until the end of September depending on snow conditions.

**McGuire Boat Ramp.** This boat ramp is located on the north shore of French Meadows Reservoir adjacent to the McGuire Picnic Area. The concrete boat ramp is 440 feet long by 20 feet wide. The length of the boat ramp above water varies, depending on the time of year, from approximately 50 to 440 feet. There are no restrictions on the type of boat that can be used on the reservoir. There are 75 parking spaces that serve the boat ramp. McGuire Boat Ramp is open for year-round use, but access may be limited by snow conditions.

**McGuire Picnic Area.** This day-use picnic area is located on the north shore of French Meadows Reservoir adjacent to the boat ramp. The picnic area consists of 10 units with picnic tables and cooking grills. The picnic area can accommodate a total of 50 visitors. The picnic area includes vault toilets and a potable water supply. The unpaved parking lot for the picnic area is 335 by 67 feet. McGuire Picnic Area is generally open from mid-May until the end of September depending on snow conditions.

#### **10.4.2 Hell Hole Reservoir Area**

Hell Hole Reservoir is located at an elevation of 4,630 feet above MSL. The reservoir can be accessed from the north by USDA-FS Road 24 (Chipmunk Ridge Road) or from the west via USDA-FS Road 2 (also referred to as the Soda Springs Riverton Road). The reservoir is surrounded by steep slopes, which are sparsely vegetated.

The lands surrounding the reservoir include both private lands and public lands managed by the USDA-FS. About 50 percent of the reservoir shoreline is administered by the ENF (USDA-FS 1997), Georgetown Ranger District. The remainder is private land under the jurisdiction of Placer County.

The recreation season typically occurs from April 15 to November 1, with the heavy use season from Memorial Day through Labor Day (USDA-FS 1997). Recreation activities include camping, sightseeing, fishing, swimming, hiking, boating, mountain bike riding and OHV use. The hiking trails in the vicinity of Hell Hole Reservoir provide good access to the southwestern portion of Granite Chief Wilderness.

Dispersed camping is not restricted in the Hell Hole Reservoir area. However, the steep terrain and limited road access constrains use. Motorized snow travel is permitted in most areas with a minimum snow pack of 12 inches, barring all ground contact.

The boating season normally occurs from April 15 to November 1 and is concentrated in the summer months between Memorial Day and Labor Day. There are no restrictions on the type or size of boats at Hell Hole Reservoir and, according to the USDA-FS no speed limits are imposed (ENF 2006). All Federal and State Boating Regulations apply including age restrictions for operation of a vessel, personal flotation devices, reckless operation and navigation rules, etc. The operator of any vessel is obligated to know the laws (USDA-FS Boating Regulation brochure 2001).

Popular watercraft used on the reservoir includes small (10 to 14 foot) aluminum fishing boats equipped with outboard engines and some larger (20 foot) aluminum boats as well. Sailboats, kayaks and canoes are also used on the reservoir to a lesser extent. A minor amount of water skiing occurs at the reservoir. Jet skis are uncommon (USDA-FS 1997).

Hell Hole Reservoir has been stocked extensively in the past with a variety of salmonid species including rainbow trout (e.g., Eagle Lake strain), brown trout, brook trout, cutthroat trout (and cutthroat-rainbow hybrids), lake trout, kokanee, and coho salmon. Recent management includes stocking of brown trout, rainbow trout (although official

records of recent rainbow plants were not located), and kokanee. The kokanee fishery in Hell Hole Reservoir is popular.

The developed recreation facilities in the vicinity Hell Hole Reservoir are located in two ENF Ranger Districts, the Georgetown Ranger District and the Pacific Ranger District. However, all of the facilities are managed by the Georgetown Ranger District, through an agreement with PCWA.

Each of the developed Project recreation facilities in the Hell Hole Reservoir area are shown on Map 10-3 (Sheet 2 of 4) and are briefly described in the following. The amenities available at each of the developed Project recreation facilities are summarized in Table 10-1. Facility capacities are summarized in Table 10-2.

### **Campgrounds**

Campsites in the Hell Hole Reservoir area typically include a graveled or paved parking spur, picnic table, and a campfire ring or low grill. The campgrounds include both flush and vault toilets. Most of the campground facilities are situated within or are surrounded by coniferous forest. Reservations are not required at any of the campgrounds in the vicinity of Hell Hole Reservoir.

**Big Meadows Campground.** This campground, which is located approximately 1 mile north of Hell Hole Reservoir near South Fork Long Canyon Creek, consists of 54 single-unit family campsites with potable water supply and flush toilets. Each unit can accommodate six PAOT giving the campground a capacity of 324 overnight visitors. The campground facilities are generally open from May 15 until November 1 depending on snowfall.

Of the 54 campsites, 47 have spur lengths of 40 to 50 feet, allowing for tent, trailer, or recreational vehicle (RV) units; 6 sites have spur lengths of 25 to 40 feet, allowing for tent access only. One site is a designated handicap accessible campsite.

**Hell Hole Campground.** This campground is located on the northwest shore of Hell Hole Reservoir uphill on a flat ridge, approximately 500 feet from the shoreline. The campground consists of 10 non-reservable single-units, potable water supply, and vault toilets. Each single unit can accommodate six PAOT giving the campground a capacity of 60 overnight visitors. The campground facilities are generally open from May 15 until November 1 depending on snow conditions.

**Upper Hell Hole Campground (Boat-in and Trail Campground).** This campground, which is located on the southeast shore of upper Hell Hole Reservoir, consists of 15 primitive single-unit campsites which can accommodate 6 PAOT each. The campground can accommodate 90 overnight visitors and is accessible by boat or via a 5 mile hiking trail, known as the Hell Hole Trail (FS route 14E02.3). This trail begins at the dam on the south side of the reservoir. It is a scenic and rocky walk along the reservoir ending at Upper Hell Hole Campground. The campground does not have drinking water. Vault toilets are available. None of the sites are reservable or handicap

accessible and there is no fee. The campground is generally open between May 15 and September 15, depending on snow conditions.

### **Day Use Areas**

Two developed day use areas are present in the Hell Hole Reservoir Area, a boat ramp and a vista, as described in the following.

**Hell Hole Boat Ramp.** This boat ramp, located adjacent to the Hell Hole Dam, is used to access the reservoir for fishing and for boating. It is open year-round, subject to snow conditions. The two-lane concrete boat launch is approximately 24 feet wide by 275 feet long, with a low masonry wall along one side. The area includes a chip-seal parking lot with space for 50 cars, with boat trailers, and two vault toilets. Masonry steps and a walkway connect the parking lot to the roadway.

**Hell Hole Vista.** This facility includes vault toilets, one picnic table and parking for approximately eight vehicles. The parking area is unpaved but the USDA-FS plans to pave the area in 2008. The facility includes a 3 foot-wide hiking trail that leads to an observation point, which overlooks Hell Hole Reservoir. The hiking trail is not handicap accessible. The vista is generally open from mid-May to the first of November depending on snowfall.

### **10.4.3 Long Canyon Creek Area**

The South Fork of Long Canyon Creek area includes private lands and land managed by the ENF. The area is accessible by taking Ralston Ridge Road to USDA-FS Road 23 (FR23) to USDA-FS Road 2. USDA-FS Road 2 parallels most of the South Fork of Long Canyon Creek.

### **Campgrounds**

One developed Project recreation facilities is present along the South Fork of Long Canyon, Middle Meadows Campground, as shown on Map 10-3 (Sheet 2 of 4) and described below. The amenities available at this facility are summarized in Table 10-1. Facility capacity is summarized in Table 10-2.

**Middle Meadows Group Campground.** This group campground is located 22 miles east of Georgetown and approximately 2.25 miles southwest of Big Meadows Campground along the South Fork Long Canyon Creek. The campground is available by reservation only. The campground consists of two walk-in units with a total capacity of 75 overnight visitors. Unit 1 has a 50-person capacity and Unit 2 has a 25-person capacity. The site includes potable water supply, vault and flush toilets, picnic tables, group stoves, and group fire rings. None of the sites are handicap accessible. The campground is generally open between May 15 and November 1 depending on snowfall.

#### 10.4.4 Ralston Afterbay Area

Ralston Afterbay is located in the TNF, American River Ranger District at an elevation of 1,179 feet above MSL. The afterbay is located 29 road miles from Auburn and 12 miles from Foresthill. It can be accessed by taking Mosquito Ridge Road, a two-lane paved access road, to the Ralston Ridge Road.

#### Day Use Areas

One developed Project recreation facility is located adjacent to the Ralston Reservoir, the Ralston Afterbay Picnic Area, as shown on Map 10-3 (Sheet 4 of 4). The amenities available at this facility are summarized in Table 10-1. Facility capacity is summarized in Table 10-2.

**Ralston Afterbay Picnic Area.** This picnic area, which is located on the north shore of Ralston Afterbay, consists of five picnic units with cooking grills and vault toilets. Potable water is available from spigots. Each picnic unit can accommodate five PAOT giving the picnic area a capacity of 25 visitors. The site is generally accessible year-round.

**Indian Bar Rafting Access and General Parking.** This area is located on Indian Bar, which is adjacent to the Oxbow Powerhouse. The area consists of a large parking area and boat ramp, which extends from the parking area to a small channel at the tailrace of the Oxbow Powerhouse. Vault toilets are available. The site is accessible year-round and is predominantly used by private and commercial boaters, who generally refer to this site as the Oxbow put in.

### 10.5 ESTIMATED RECREATION USE AND PERCENT CAPACITY REACHED AT PROJECT RECREATION FACILITIES

PCWA does not collect use data at any of the developed Project recreation facilities. However, recreation use is recorded at some of the developed Project campgrounds by concessionaires under contract with the USDA-FS. In addition, the USDA-FS estimates recreation use at some of the Project day use facilities. This data is compiled by the USDA-FS and converted to Recreation Visitor Days (RVDs). An RVD is equivalent to 12 hours of recreation use in any combination of persons and hours. For example, two people visiting a site for 6 hours is equal to 1 RVD.

The USDA-FS provided PCWA with a variety of recreation use data for various Project recreation facilities for the years 2000 through 2005. Some of this data was provided in a summary format and some of it was provided as notes and raw data sheets. PCWA is currently compiling and tabulating the raw data. Data that was provided in a summary format by the USDA-FS is shown in Table 10-3 in RVDs. As indicated, recreation use is concentrated around French Meadows Reservoir.

## 10.6 DISPERSED RECREATION

Dispersed recreation occurs throughout the Watershed. Dispersed uses mainly include: hiking, picnicking, camping, site seeing, nature viewing, fishing, hunting, mountain biking, mining, whitewater boating, and horseback riding. In general, dispersed use is more prevalent where roads or trails provide access. The locations of the most popular trails in the Watershed are shown on Map 10-2 (2 sheets), with respect to the primary access roads and other reference points.

Whitewater boating is popular in the Watershed, particularly on the Middle Fork American River, downstream of Ralston Afterbay. Whitewater boating also occurs on the Rubicon River between Ellicott Bridge and Ralston Afterbay, but the difficulty of the rapids on this river reach excludes all but advanced and expert boaters. The established whitewater runs, including put-ins and take-outs, are shown on Map 10-4 and are described in more detail below. The discussion relies on information available in two published guide books, *The Best Whitewater in California- A Guide to the 180 Runs* (Stanley and Holbek 1998) and *California Whitewater – A Guide to the Rivers* (Cassady and Calhoun 1995), and on information published by the DPR for the Auburn SRA.

### 10.6.1 Whitewater Boating on the Middle Fork American River

Whitewater boating occurs on the Middle Fork American River between Oxbow Powerhouse and the confluence of the North Fork American River. This section is typically divided into three distinct runs as shown on Map 10-4 and described as follows:

- **Tunnel Chute Run.** The Tunnel Chute Run begins at a put-in located near the Oxbow Powerhouse and extends about 17 miles to a take-out at commonly referred to as either Ruck-a-Chucky or Greenwood, which is located at the end of Driver's Flat Road. The run is considered Class IV on the International Scale of Difficulty and is typically boated between flows of 800 and 1,500 cfs, with optimum flows being around 1,200 cfs (Holbek and Stanley 1998). Holbek and Stanley recommend portaging around Tunnel Chute, a tunnel blasted through a horseshoe in the river by miners, and around Ruck-A-Chucky rapids. The Tunnel Chute Run is the most popular run on the Middle Fork American River. It is boated both commercially and privately but commercial use accounts for most of the whitewater use.
- **Mammoth Bar Run.** The Mammoth Bar Run begins at Ruck-a-Chucky (also referred to as Greenwood or Drivers Flat) and extends 7 miles to a take-out at Mammoth Bar, which is accessible from an unpaved road leading off of the Auburn-Foresthill Road. The run is considered a Class II on the International Scale of Difficulty with long stretches of Class I pools and riffles. This run is popular with novice and beginning boaters and is boatable between flows ranging from 400-3000 cfs, depending on watercraft.
- **Murderer's Bar Run.** This run begins at Mammoth Bar and ends 2 miles downstream at the confluence of the North Fork and Middle Fork American rivers.

Boaters typically take-out just past the confluence with the North Fork American River at a gravel bar located below Old Foresthill Road Bridge. This run is considered a Class V on the International Scale of Difficulty and involves a possible portage around Murderer's Bar. This run is boatable between flows ranging from 400-3,000 depending upon watercraft and skill level.

These three runs can be boated in one day or in a two-to three-day trip. Overnight camping associated with whitewater boating occurs at two primitive camping areas found at Cache Rock and at the confluence with Otter Creek (Fords Bar) and at two developed campgrounds located at Ruck-a-Chucky and Cherokee Bar. Boaters who plan to camp along the river must obtain a River Camping Permit from the ASRA Headquarters (DPR no date).

Currently, boating is prohibited downstream of the Middle Fork/North Fork American River confluence. However, in 2008 ASRA plans to open a four-mile run from the confluence of the Middle and North Forks American rivers to Oregon Bar, which is located just downstream of the old Auburn Dam site. This run will likely be rated as Class I to Class II on the International Scale of Difficulty (B. Deitchman pers. comm.).

### **Availability of Flows Downstream of Oxbow Powerhouse**

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) and PCWA currently coordinate with the ASRA and a designated commercial whitewater boating representative to schedule MFP operations to enhance whitewater recreation in the Middle Fork American River below Oxbow Powerhouse. Whitewater boating releases are scheduled on a voluntary basis such that they do not compromise power production needs. This informal coordination typically occurs by telephone conference call in May or June, each year.

When whitewater flows are provided, they typically occur on weekends from June until September during late morning (10 or 11 a.m.) to early afternoon (2 or 3 p.m.). MFP operations provide flow releases of approximately 950 to 1,000 cfs. On summer weekdays, Project operations are voluntarily modified to accommodate commercial whitewater boating by releasing water 1 to 2 hours earlier than would normally occur for power production purposes only, starting from 10 to 11 a.m. (S. Lau, pers. Comm. 2006). Over the past five years, 2001 was the only year in which power production demands limited releases for whitewater boating (S. Lau, pers. comm. 2006).

### **Commercial Whitewater Boating Management**

DPR manages commercial whitewater boating along the North Fork and Middle Fork of the American rivers within the ASRA. Commercial whitewater permits are required annually for the lower Middle Fork American River; however, no permits are required for private boaters.

In 2003, ASRA updated the River Management Plan (RMP) for the Middle Fork American River within the ASRA. The updated RMP is designed to better regulate and administer boating demands on the river. Pursuant to the RMP, the Middle Fork

whitewater outfitters are allowed to operate commercial trips through a written, signed and approved State Parks Concessions Contract (Concessions Contract).

The Concessions Contracts or “permits” issued for the Middle Fork American River are divided into two types: Middle Fork Class IV, and Middle Fork Class II. In 2005, 28 Class IV permits and 24 Class II permits were issued for the Middle Fork American River. A Class IV permit allows boating along both the Tunnel Chute (Class IV) and Mammoth Bar (Class II) runs while a Class II permit is restricted to the Mammoth Bar Run.

According to the Concessions Contract (DPR 2006), the demand for “starting” trips down the river on weekends and holidays during the summer generally exceeds the maximum allowable commercial (concession) use. To address this issue, DPR worked closely with commercial outfitters, other agencies, the general public, and various user groups to design a system of “Special Requirements”. The Special Requirements limit the number of launches at the Oxbow Put-In to 25 during specified “control dates”. The companies allowed to launch on any specific control day are determined each year during the Outfitter Draw meeting.

### **Estimated Boating Use**

According to DPR, about 85 percent of the whitewater boating use along the Middle Fork American River is commercial. Private and commercial use estimates provided by the DPR are summarized on Table 10-4. As indicated, between January 1 through October 31, 2005, a total of 2,844 commercial boats with 14,678 clients ran the Class IV “Tunnel Chute Run”. A total of 28 commercial boats with 192 clients ran the Class II “Mammoth Bar Run” during the same year. By contrast, an estimated total of 53 private boats with 318 people boated both runs during the same time period. Commercial whitewater boating use on the Middle Fork American River varies according to the day of the week. According to the DPR (1997 and 1998), the majority of boating occurs on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. The least amount of use occurs on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

In 2005, approximately 11.6 percent of the total number of commercial clients who boated the Middle Fork American River spent at least one night camping (K. Dey pers. comm.).

### **10.6.2 Whitewater Boating on the Rubicon River**

The Rubicon River is boatable from Ellicott Bridge to the Ralston Afterbay. This run is typically referred to as the Lower Rubicon Run and considered Class V on the International Scale of Difficulty. It is considered boatable at flows ranging from 500 to 2,000 cfs, with optimum flows around 1,200 cfs. This run is typically only boated during periods of high run off, when Hell Hole Dam spills.

This run is considered difficult and involves 2 to 5 portages, depending on flow conditions. The entire run is 20.3 miles long and typically requires two days.

## Estimated Boating Use

There are no verifiable use data for whitewater boating activity along the Rubicon River from Ellicott Bridge to Ralston Afterbay.

### 10.7 CURRENT AND FUTURE RECREATION NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN MANAGEMENT PLANS

The FERC regulations require a discussion of current and future recreation needs identified in State comprehensive plans and regional conservation and recreation plans. PCWA evaluated the various comprehensive plans identified on the FERC's August 2007 List of Comprehensive Plans, and found a number of plans relevant to the relicensing of the MFP. In addition, PCWA evaluated other plans not included on the FERC's List of Comprehensive Plans. The following four Comprehensive Plans specifically pertain to recreation:

- California Department of Parks and Recreation: Recreation Outlook in Planning District 3. An Element of the California Outdoor Recreation Resources Plan (1980).
- California Department of Parks and Recreation: Recreation Needs in California (1983).
- California Department of Parks and Recreation: California Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) (2002).
- California Department of Parks and Recreation: Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California (2002).

These four plans and their relevance to the Project are discussed in the Comprehensive Plans Report contained in Supporting Document E.

### 10.8 REFERENCES

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USDA-FS. 1993. Granite Chief Wilderness Management Plan, Wilderness Implementation Schedule and Decision Notice.

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**TABLES**

**Table 10-1. Developed Project Recreation Facilities.**

Project Region	Single Units	Group Units	Flush Toilet	Vault Toilet	Potable Water	RV Dump Station	Boat Launch	Handicap Accessible	Amenities <sup>a</sup>
<b>French Meadows Reservoir Area</b>									
<b>Campgrounds</b>									
French Meadows Campground	75 Units: Sites 1-31 (R) 32-75 (Non-R)		X	X	X	Nearby		Sites 16, 17, 18, 21, 36, 38 (+2 non- numbered)	Bear-proof containers, driveway lengths from 20 to 52 feet
Poppy Campground	12 Units (Non- R)			X					Hike-in or boat-in access
Lewis Campground	40 Units (Non-R)		X	X	X	Nearby		Site 21	Bear-proof containers
Coyote Group Campground		4 Group Units (R)	X	X	X	Nearby		Black Bear Group Site	Bear-proof containers
Gates Group Campground		3 Group Units (R)	X		X	Nearby			Bear-proof containers
Ahart Campground	12 Units (Non-R)			X		Nearby			Bear-proof containers
<b>Day-Use Areas</b>									
French Meadows Picnic Area/French Meadows Boat Ramp				X	X		X (46 parking spaces)		Picnic tables, cooking grill
McGuire Picnic Area/McGuire Boat Ramp				X	X		X (75 parking spaces)		Picnic tables, cooking grill

**Table 10-1. Developed Project Recreation Facilities (continued).**

	Single Units	Group Units	Flush Toilet	Vault Toilet	Potable Water	RV Dump Station	Boat Launch	Handicap Accessible	Amenities <sup>a</sup>
<b>Hell Hole Reservoir Area</b>									
<b>Campgrounds</b>									
Big Meadows Campground	54 units (Non-R)		X		X			Site 52	
Upper Hell Hole Campground	15 Units (Non-R)			X					Hike-in or boat-in access
Hell Hole Campground	10 Units (Non-R)			X	X				
<b>Day-Use Areas</b>									
Hell Hole Boat Ramp Hell Hole General Parking Area/Hell Hole Boat Ramp Parking Area				X			X (50 parking spaces)		
Hell Hole Vista				X					Picnic tables, trail
<b>Ralston Afterbay Area</b>									
<b>Day-Use Areas</b>									
Ralston Afterbay Picnic Area				X	X				Picnic tables, cooking grill
<b>Long Canyon Creek Area</b>									
<b>Campgrounds</b>									
Middle Meadows Group Campground		Unit 1 (R) Unit 2 (R)	X	X	X				

Source: USDA Forest Service Website and reserveusa.com.

<sup>a</sup>Developed campgrounds typically include parking, picnic tables, campfire ring, and cooking grill.

R = Reservable, Non-R = Non-reservable

**Table 10-2. Capacity of Developed Project Recreation Facilities.**

Facility	Number of Units	Maximum PAOT <sup>a</sup> Capacity
<b>Campgrounds</b> (assumes 6 person per unit capacity, except as noted)		
French Meadows	75	450
Poppy <sup>b</sup>	12	72
Lewis	40	240
Ahart	12	72
Gates Group	3	25
		25
		75
Coyote Group	4	25
		25
		75
		50
Hell Hole	10	60
Upper Hell Hole <sup>b</sup>	15	90
Big Meadows	54	324
Middle Meadows Group	2	50
		25
<b>Total (Family):</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>1,308</b>
<b>Total Group:</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>325</b>

<b>Picnic Areas</b> (assumes 5 person per unit capacity)		
McGuire	10	50
French Meadows	7	35
Ralston Afterbay	5	25
<b>Total:</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>110</b>

Scenic Vista	Parking Spaces
Hell Hole Vista	Approximately 8
<b>Boat Ramps</b>	
McGuire	75
French Meadows	46
Hell Hole	50

Sources: PCWA Revised Recreation Plan (1989), FERC Order Approving the Revised Recreation Plan (1992), USDA Forest

<sup>a</sup>PAOT – Persons At One Time

<sup>b</sup>Boat-In and trail accessible Campground

Table 10-3. Estimated Use at Project Recreation Facilities in RVDs <sup>a</sup>.

<b>French Meadows Area</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
<b>Campgrounds</b>						
Ahart campground	-	1979	1573	1590	1530	-
Coyote Group Campground	-	7046	8825	10584	11280	-
Poppy Camground	-	1765	1642	1660	1500	-
French Meadows Campground	-	11708	11936	10500	10847	-
Gates Group Campground	-	10759	7891	8770	11040	-
Lewis Campground	-	4108	3068	2500	2000	-
<b>Day Use Areas</b>						
French Meadows Picnic Area	-	150	140	130	100	-
McGuire Picnic Area	-	194	181	150	150	-
French Meadows Boat Ramp	-	837	779	900	1000	-
McGuire Boat Ramp	-	245	228	280	250	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>43266<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>38791</b>	<b>36263</b>	<b>37064</b>	<b>39697</b>	<b>38110<sup>b</sup></b>
<b>Hell Hole Area</b>						
<b>Campgrounds</b>						
Big Meadows Campground	-	3904	-	1295	-	-
Hell Hole Campground	-	1175	-	280	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>431<sup>c</sup></b>	<b>5079</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1575</b>	<b>2506<sup>c</sup></b>	<b>2765<sup>c</sup></b>
<b>Day Use Areas</b>						
Upper Hell Hole Campground	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hell Hole Vista	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hell Hole General Parking Area	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hell Hole Boat Ramp Parking Area	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hell Hole Boat Ramp	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Ralston Afterbay Area</b>						
<b>Day Use Areas</b>						
Ralston Picnic Area	3491	3557	3658	3750	3935	3950
Ralston Picnic Area Cartop Boat Ramp	-	-	-	-	-	-
Indian Bar Rafting Access and General Parki	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Long Canyon Area</b>						
<b>Campgrounds</b>						
Middle Meadow Campground	660	1766	235	2170	2139	1234

**Notes**

<sup>a</sup>An RVD is a Recreation Visitor Day and is equivalent to 12 hours of recreation use in any combination of persons and hours.

<sup>b</sup>Data provided by USDA-FS as total of all sites. Individual site totals not available for 2000 and 2005.

<sup>c</sup>Data provided by USDA-FS as total of Hell Hole and Big Meadows campgrounds. Individual site totals not available for 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2005.

- Data is either not available or not yet compiled in a summary format

**Table 10-4. Auburn State Recreation Area: Whitewater Recreation Use  
January 1 – October 31, 2005.**

	<b>Middle Fork Class IV</b>	<b>Middle Fork Class II</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Permits Approved	28	24	Firm count
Boats/Commercial	2844	28	Firm count
Vehicles/Commercial	978	7	Total represents approx. 20%- 50% of actual count.
Trips/Commercial 1-day	976	16	992 total commercial trips (Firm count)
Trips/Commercial Camping	-	85	
Clients/Commercial	14,678	192	Firm count
Private Boaters	288	30	Total represents approx. 5%- 10% of actual count.
Private Boats	48	5	Total represents approx. 5%- 10% of actual count.

Data and comments were provided by California Department of Parks and Recreation - Auburn State Recreation Area

Note: "-" indicates no data available or count is zero

**MAPS**

**APPENDIX 10-A**

**Background Information Regarding the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act**

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## **Background Information Regarding the Eligible or Suitable National Wild and Scenic Rivers in the Middle Fork American River Watershed**

The following provides additional background regarding the status of eligible or suitable Wild and Scenic River segments located in the Middle Fork American River Watershed (Watershed).

### **Middle Fork of the American River**

In January 1993, the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) published the report entitled, "American River Water Resources Investigation, Wild and Scenic Rivers Eligibility and Preliminary Classification" (USBR 1993). This study was conducted as part of a larger land and water resource planning effort known as the American River Water Resources Investigation (also known as the Auburn Dam Project). In this study, three segments on the North and Middle Forks of the American rivers were found "Eligible" for Wild and Scenic designation under the WSRRA, as follows.

- Middle Fork American River: From Oxbow Dam to the confluence with the North Fork American River. Length is approximately 23 miles.
- North Fork American River: From Colfax-Iowa Hill Bridge to the upper end of Lake Clementine. Length is approximately 16 miles.
- North Fork American River: The North Fork, from North Fork Debris Dam to the intake of the Auburn Dam diversion tunnel. Length is approximately 5 miles.

The study concluded that these segments possess "outstandingly remarkable values" (ORVs) that meet the required WSRRA standards for eight resource categories including Recreation, Scenic, Geologic, Wildlife, Fish, Ecological and Other Values and Cultural. Only one ORV is required to qualify a river segment for WSR eligibility. In order for the river segment to be considered eligible in this study, the ORVs must occur on federally administered lands.

The summary statement in the 1993 study indicated that the next step in the process would be a suitability study to determine if the eligible river segments are suitable for designation to the National Wild and Scenic River System. According to the USBR, a suitability study has not been conducted and there are no plans to conduct a suitability study at this time (R. Schroeder, pers. comm. 2006). The USBR and other State and federal resource agencies are required to manage the river and the area within ¼ mile of the river to protect the ORVs until the suitability study is completed.

### **Rubicon River**

In the early 1980s, as part of the preparation to develop the Eldorado National Forest (ENF) Land and Resources Management Plan (1988 LRMP), the ENF conducted eligibility and suitability studies to determine if the Rubicon River met the requirements for designation as a national Wild and Scenic River (WSR). The full length of the Rubicon River was evaluated for eligibility. The upper Rubicon, above Hell Hole

Reservoir was found not eligible, and the lower Rubicon, below Hell Hole Dam was found eligible. Subsequently, a suitability study was conducted along three segments of the Rubicon River from Hell Hole Dam to Ralston Afterbay. The study concluded that all three segments of the Rubicon River possessed ORVs that met the required WSRA standards for “Scenic”, “Fish”, and “Other” Values. Only one ORV is required to qualify a river segment for WSR eligibility.

The ENF-LRMP recommended all three segments of the lower Rubicon River for scenic river designation. However, the classification for the river in the ENF-LRMP was appealed, and in a subsequent decision by the Chief of the Forest Service, the two lower segments, from Ellicott Bridge to Ralston Afterbay were recommended for Wild classification in addition to Scenic classification. The upper segment, from 100 yards below the Hell Hole Dam to Ellicott Bridge, continues to have a Scenic classification (S. Rodman pers. comm.). The ENF formally recommended that Congress designate the Rubicon River under the Wild and Scenic Rivers system (S. Rodman pers. comm.). However, the United States Congress has not yet acted to officially designate the river. Regardless, the USDA-FS manages the Rubicon River, and a ¼ mile corridor, to protect the ORV’s identified in their W&SR eligibility study.

In an amendment to the Tahoe National Forest (TNF) LRMP, the Forest Supervisor concluded that the segment of the upper Rubicon River on the TNF above Hell Hole Reservoir is not eligible to be included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. This decision is described in the report entitled, “Record of Decision: Twenty-two Westside Rivers Wild and Scenic Study Report and Final Environmental Impact Statement” (USDA-FS, Tahoe National Forest/Plumas National Forest undated). This recommendation concurs with the findings of the ENF for the same river segment as described above.